

Discovering Joseph Eschenlohr:
How linking records illuminated a life.

dcicdigital curation
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Introduction

During the US Civil War, thousands of immigrants served in the military, many receiving pensions upon discharge from service. The Bureau of Pensions kept extensive service records, which are now held at the National Archives and Records Administration, and those records now serve as popular resources for research, particularly genealogical research. However, many soldiers, both immigrants and US-natives, moved overseas, leaving behind a paper trail which can be traced if one knows where to look. This project examines records from four National Archives records groups which document the life of Joseph Eschenlohr, a German-born immigrant to the US who served in the Union army during the Civil War and later returned to his home in Alsace, to examine how linking metadata can help archivists maximize the discoverability of historic records, both to the benefit of the institution and the public.

Metadata Analysis

RG 15	RG 94	RG 84	RG 48
-Name -Rank -Company/Vessel -Date of Birth -Residence(s) -Posthumous applicants -Box # -Folder # -Location -Record Group	-Name -Rank -Company/Vessel -Date of Birth -Residence(s) -Box # -Folder # -Location -Record Group	-Title -Volume # -Author/creator -Topic(s) -Related locales -Box # -Location -Record Group	-Title -Volume # -Author/creator -Topic(s) -Related locales -Location -Record Group

Some record groups are more obviously linked than others. How can archivists link records from record groups like RG 15 and RG 84? At what point in the processing workflow should these connections be made? Can the discoverability of records be maximized through other methods besides linking data? Are individualized recommendations based on browsing data the way forward? Crowdsourced metadata tags?

Timeline of events in Joseph Eschenlohr’s life as documented by records from four records groups at the National Archives and Records Administration

